

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

Number 278

March 8th, 1945

A GERMAN CHAPLAIN IN OUR RANKS

The war has changed many occupied countries into liberated countries and British Christians have waited with keen interest for the first contacts with the Churches in those areas. These contacts have been set up and are yielding very fruitful results in co-operation, and there has been a great deal of "re-knitting severed friendships."

Many are waiting with interest for the first news of those who have been known to belong to the resistance front of the German Confessional Church.

In this connection it may be of interest to report that a German war chaplain who has recently come over as a prisoner is well known to German Confessional representatives at present in Britain. He has described the sufferings which he and others endured during the years leading up to the outbreak of war, and mentions how various Confessional pastors have been imprisoned or put to death.

He wrote a pamphlet for fellow members of the resistance front and we think our readers may be interested to see some extracts from a translation of it. It was written while the author was still serving as a German war chaplain and printed secretly. It is entitled "THEREFORE BE SOBER! A Message to my Brothers."

The pamphlet begins:

"It was during the last evenings before, as a soldier, I was put on the train for France, that I gathered my thoughts together under this heading, regarding them at the same time as my theological testament in the event of something happening to me. Since then four years have passed, four terrible years of war, of gloom, of lies, of hatred, of suffering and wretchedness. By the grace of God I was preserved and brought safely

through those years. But I have had to look on with horror and see unfolding before me the events which at that time I dreaded in anxious surmise, but in a form more frightful and shocking than any I dared envisage. And for this reason I must raise my voice once again and repeat what I said then, and in the same words as then—I have no need to take back any of them—but with even more urgency, with even more pleading. When I expressed these thoughts four years ago I was met here and there with the reproach that my outlook was *biased*. Well, is it *bias* when a Christian takes the ideas contained in the Holy Scriptures seriously, when he is bold enough for once to regard a juncture in world events with the eyes of a Christian? Why—as Karl Barth says—should not the arrow which is placed against the bow-string fly on its course? Is that *biased*? Should not Christianity be bold enough to break away once and for all from the 'as well as-also' attitude and in its place take up the clear 'either-or' of the Apostles and prophets? For this reason I would like to repeat, and even more plainly than before, 'Therefore be sober' (1 Peter 5, 8).

"... We live in an age no less pervaded by superstitions and devils than were the Middle Ages. Instead of the witch-mania it is the *Jew-mania* which inspires the orgies of our allegedly 'enlightened' era. This Jew-mania, which was already raging madly in the Middle Ages, has reached an acute stage nowadays. This must be realized by the Church, the congregation of Jesus Christ. And it must protect itself, it must take action in the name of Jesus Christ, that is to say it must *exorcize* it. If it does not do so then it has failed in its duty just as it did at the time of the persecution of the witches. To-day

Distributed by
BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

An Agency of The British Government

30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

the blood of millions of slaughtered Jews, of men, women and children, cries to heaven for redress. The Church must not keep silence. It must not say that the settlement of the Jewish problem is a civil matter and one in which the State is entitled to authority on the basis of Romans 13. Nor must the Church say that the Jews are now receiving the punishment they deserve for their sins. For whoever would thus be a spectator of God's judgment must be turned into a block of salt (Genesis 19, 26). There can, therefore, be no attitude of indifference for the Christian in this matter. There is not such a thing as moderate—Christian—Anti-Semitism, even when it is presented in an illuminating manner with logical (say national) reasons or even with scientific (shall we say pseudo-scientific?) reasons. The witch-mania too was once given a scientific basis by experts from the Faculties of Theology, Law and Medicine. The fight against Judaism comes from that same murky spring as did once the witch-mania. Mankind of to-day has still not outgrown the search for a 'scapegoat,' and therefore it is always searching for all kinds of 'guilty' people, Jews, Freemasons and powers unanswerable to the State. That is the background of all the hymns of hatred being sung in our times. A Christian cannot be an anti-Semite, not even a 'moderate' anti-Semite. The excuse that without the reaction of a 'wholesome' anti-Semitism the national life would be in dire peril of 'judaization' springs from a faithless and purely secular outlook, one which the Christian should overcome.

"It is, therefore, necessary for the Christianity of our times to make the same decision which the congregations of the Middle Ages had to make. Instead of searching for a scapegoat and instead of singing hymns of hatred, it must *repent* and acknowledge its own guilt. It must exorcize all the demons which have invaded our era with the triumphant assurance that Jesus is the victor, that He is the lord of all spirits, that everything must be subject to Him and that He is leading the world on towards His return and His wonderful Kingdom. The Church, it is true, cannot interfere with the wheel of events, which is turning inexorably on its course. But it must *profess*. It must *preach*. And it must live according to its creed, in *faith, love and hope*."

AN ASSAULT DIVISION CHAPLAIN REPORTS ON 1944

Our readers will be interested to see the following report on the year's work by a

Senior Chaplain in an Assault Division in Western Europe throughout the historic events of 1944:

"In view of the historic quality of the year, I feel it might be of interest to make a review of 1944 as it affects the work of the Church through the Royal Army Chaplains' Department in this Assault Division.

Statistics

"Four men have received the Sacrament of Baptism since we came into the field.

"During the year the total number of communicants was 12,078, the figures for each month being:

January	557	July	1,071
February	676	August	990
March	609	September	743
April	756	October	674
May	1,375	November	900
June	1,933	December	1,794

"It will be noted that the number of communicants rose considerably during the month of May, a fact probably due to the assault role which had been given to this Division in the invasion operation. It is noteworthy that so many soldiers availed themselves of the sacramental resources of the Church. From the figures it will be seen that the same fact is true with reference to June, July and August when the Division was committed heavily to battle.

Personnel

"Of our personnel one chaplain was wounded on D-Day but carried on, taking over some of the duties of the Medical Officer of his battalion who was killed. This chaplain was wounded again the following day and was eventually sent back to England. Another chaplain was wounded in August.

"In my 11 years' service with the R.A.Ch.D., 1944 is by far the most eventful in my Army career. I served as chaplain in Malta from January, 1939, until April, 1942, part of which time the island was under heavy air attack. When I was appointed SCF 3 Br. Inf. Div. in September, 1943, it was known that this Division had been chosen for an assault role in pending operations. The Division was then in hard training and my chaplains, of course, took part in this in addition to their own specialized training. We became familiar with infantry battle conditions. We drew up forms of service for before and after battle. These were the product of composite planning by the team.

"By May, 1944, the Division had completed its training and had most of its equipment

for the assault. The completeness of the assault planning can be indicated by the fact that provision was made even for the particular requirements of the chaplains in their assault role. Before we went into sealed camps I received for each of my chaplains a special Communion set composed of chalice, paten and two flasks, all in silver. The advantage of having unbreakable flasks was most valuable, and they proved their worth, not only on the beach-head but later under varying battle conditions.

"The chaplains went into sealed camps with their units and, while they were there, conducted pre-battle services. They conducted services also on board the craft during the voyage to the beach. I celebrated Holy Communion on board my craft, an LCT (Landing Craft Tank), one hour before the officers and men were timed to land. Other chaplains did likewise. All chaplains were on the beach by mid-day, several of them already some miles inland with their units.

"It would be impossible to say too much in praise of the chaplains under my charge. On the beach and in the confined beach-head during the first five weeks of the battle, which ended in the fall of Caen, they were in an area which was shelled every day and frequently bombed. They lived like most others, in slit trenches and in holes in the ground and in shattered buildings which had been converted into Regimental Aid Posts. They conducted services, ministered to the wounded and dying and they supervised burials and did all the many other tasks which fall to the duty of the chaplains. Their unit commanding officers reported in every case most favourably of their work. The experience which these chaplains have gone through has given them a deep knowledge of men under the most testing conditions.

General Observations

"Historians who write of the events during this memorable year will no doubt find an abundance of material. As an Army Chaplain I might be allowed to point out that parallel with a substantial military victory there has been a noteworthy achievement of a spiritual nature. To put it briefly, two historic provinces of Christendom and a large part of a third, Holland, have been restored to their own Christian tradition after four years' occupation by an enemy whose official policy has been anti-Christian. This may appear to be a statement of the obvious, but I have not seen any such declaration from any public source. The instrument of this liberation has been a combined force,

Navy, Army, Air, from countries which inherit the same Christian tradition, Britain, Canada, United States.

"Some aspects of Continental Christianity are strange to many of our soldiers, but I have observed the unflinching respect they have shown for the religious manifestations of the countries they are in. They have been unfeignedly astonished to see in the innumerable highway shrines and in the homes of the people the religious symbols of the French, Belgian and Dutch. They have also been struck by the common practice of family prayers in the homes which they have shared as billets. On the other hand, the civilian populations have been favourably impressed by the official encouragement of religious worship given by the British Army; they remember that the German Army had a most meagre allotment of chaplains, who do other duties as well.

"This campaign has demonstrated unmistakably the truth that war, though regrettable, is indeed a social act which affects every aspect of human affairs. The soldier engaged in a campaign meets the civil population in an all-revealing realism. Our troops have seen these populations under miseries of war in columns of refugee civilians of all ages, and contrastingly have witnessed the elation of liberation. The soldier has seen a phenomenon, possibly the greatest mass social event of the century. In all this, under Providence, he has taken a part, the plain soldier, slightly bewildered but the authentic champion of the good cause and to some extent aware of his high privilege in the context of these apocalyptic events."

A CLUB FOR B.L.A. CHAPLAINS

"A correspondent" wrote in the *Church Times* for March 2nd, 1944, as follows:

"I remember some years ago, after my ship had been torpedoed in the Mediterranean, sinking into the quiet of the Chaplains' Club in Cairo for a fortnight's rest. It was there that I first met the Rev. F. Busby, who had won the M.B.E. on the beaches of Crete. He has had a large part in the expert handling of the scheme for Anglican Service candidates for ordination in all the countries of the Middle East.

"Lately I accepted an invitation to stay at the counterpart of the club in that part of Europe designated by the initials 'B.L.A.' The same priest holds the same position. Here the chaplains' club is called St. George's House.

"The club in Cairo, excellent though it was,

was totally inadequate in size for its work. At St. George's are spacious rooms—lounge, dining-hall, library and chapel. Here is the rallying point for chaplains in the B.L.A.; here they gather for retreats, conferences and study-groups. They can enjoy their occasional forty-eight hours' leave here, or spend their time of convalescence after illness. It is a fellowship centre where priests can get to know one another, and discuss together common problems and experiences.

"Here too is the rallying point of that growing army of ordination candidates, and here is housed the library which is helping to prepare their minds for the difficulties to be met in their training and in their ministry afterwards.

Ordination Candidates

"There are three hundred and sixty-five Anglican candidates at present, and their number grows from week to week. Sixty per cent. of them have reached matriculation standard, and they represent all ranks in the Army. Between ten and twenty candidates visit St. George's House weekly, and receive instruction in addition to the monthly notes which every candidate is given. Every week at the House there is one New Testament class, and two in New Testament Greek.

"An interesting point is that, in addition to candidates for the ministry itself, there are men who have offered themselves for lay-ministry."

CHURCH PLANS FOR RETURN OF FORCES

Dr. Micklem, speaking on March 4th in the B.B.C. series "Christian News and Commentary," referred to plans for the return of men and women from the Forces which were being made by a parish in the Chelmsford Diocese. A questionnaire was sent to the men and various needs were revealed, such

as the need for systematic instruction in Christian teaching, for new efforts to appreciate the point of view of those in the Forces, and a new spirit in parish life at home. Dr. Micklem added: "There seems to have been a widespread view that the life of the parish church left much to be desired in respect of fellowship, brotherliness, comradeship, friendliness. In a church, money should have no prestige and class distinctions have no place. Christianity is thought to be too much a selfish seeking of individual salvation and to go with censoriousness towards others. It is widely thought that on the whole the Church stands for vested interests and privilege. 'The Church,' says the report, 'must be prepared to take a more active interest, in the Name of Christ, in the conditions under which men live and work, and must be prepared to act as a corporate body in the service of the community. Service people generally consider it self-evident that the Church, if she is to be true to her own standards, must be the champion of social justice—particularly, at the moment, in the matter of housing and employment.'"

St. Leonard's Parish, Streatham, in making preparations for the return of men and women in the Forces, has constituted an Advisory Panel, a group of people, each with specialized experience of a particular business, trade or profession. They have volunteered their services in order to advise members of the parish who will be taking decisions about their future career as to the best course for them to follow. The members of the Panel include specialists on no less than twenty-seven different kinds of career, including such widely differing subjects as dancing, the Civil Service and the Sacred Ministry. There is also a Household and Domestic Affairs Section to give advice and help on any personal domestic problems which arise and on which people may desire to hear experienced opinions.